DARK HORSE COMICS

ALIENS™

EARTH WAR

1 (of 4)
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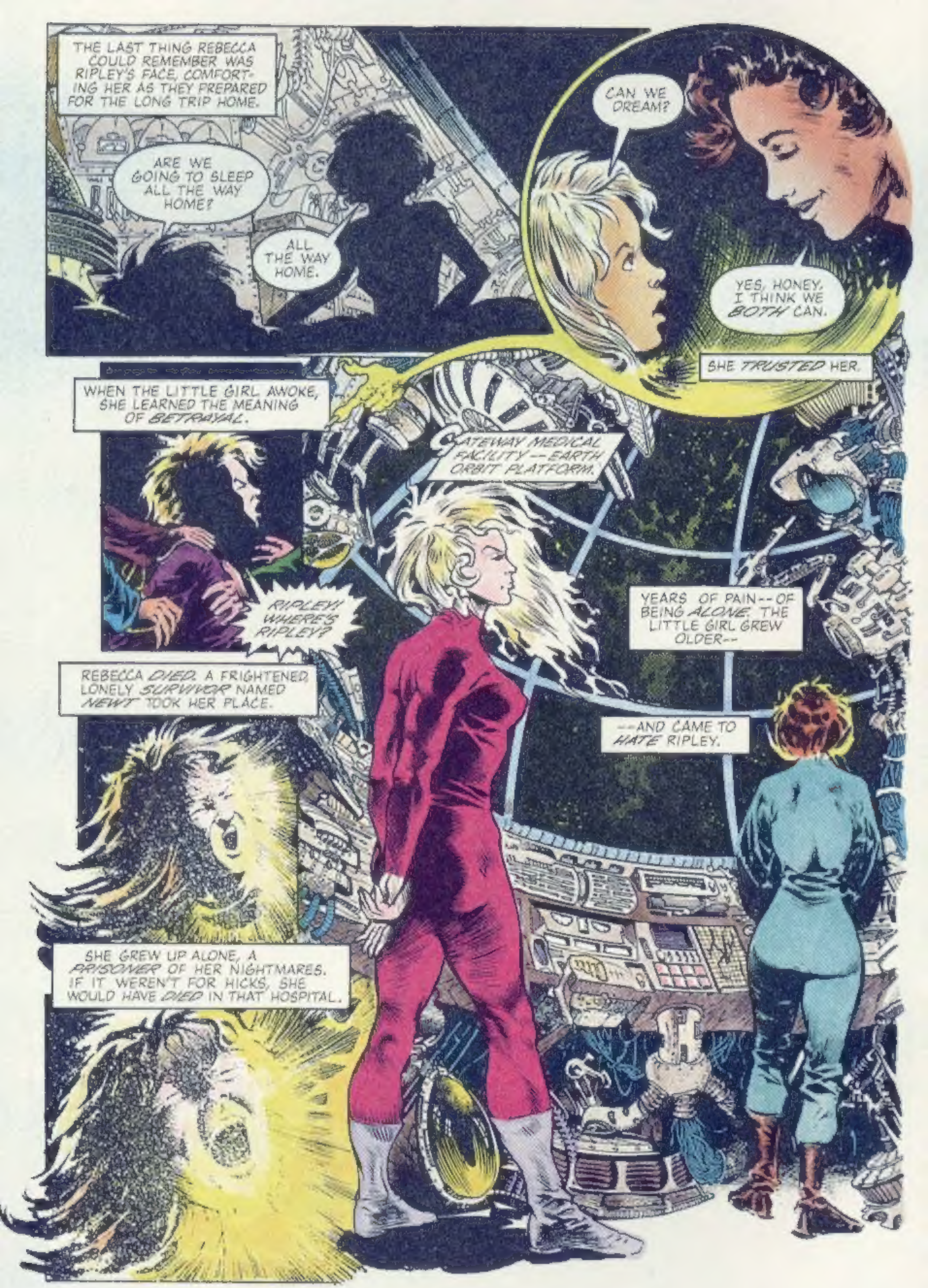
PLANET LV-426--ACHERON TERRA-FORMING COLONY.
WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I KNEW A LITTLE GIRL NAMED REBECCA. HER FRIENDS CALLED HER NEWT.
SHE HAD A DOLL NAMED CASEY. THE TWO WOULD STARE FOR HOURS AS MANMADE STORMS BATTERED THEIR TINY SETTLEMENT.
THE ADULT COLONISTS FOUND THEIR NEW ENVIRONMENT CRUEL AND UNRELENTING, BUT THE LITTLE GIRL HAD KNOWN NOTHING ELSE. TO HER, THE PLANET WAS HOME.
SHE ONLY WANTED WHAT ALL CHILDREN WANT--
--THE WARMTH AND SECURITY OF FAMILY--
--THE HUMAN CONNECTEDNESS THAT COMES FROM BELONGING.

WHAT SHE GOT WAS A NIGHTMARE WITHOUT END.
NO--!

AS THE DEMONS RAGED, REBECCA SOUGHT SHELTER IN THE COLD STEEL MAZE BENEATH THE PLANET'S SURFACE.
SHE LISTENED FOR THE SCREAMS, AND WHEN THEY DIED...
SHE LISTENED FOR THEM.
SHE WASN'T MATURE ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUE HORROR OF HER SITUATION. PERHAPS THAT WAS ALL THAT SAVED HER.
THEN ONE DAY, THERE WAS A NEW SOUND. RESCUE.
TO THE CHILD'S EYE, THE SOLDIERS WERE AS FRIGHTENING AS THE MONSTERS--
--WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A CORPORAL NAMED HICKS AND A CIVILIAN OBSERVER THEY CALLED RIPLEY.
HONEY--IT'S OKAY--!
SHE WASN'T LIKE THE OTHERS. SHE UNDERSTOOD.
OUT OF THE MARINES, ONLY HICKS SURVIVED --IF YOU COULD CALL WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM SURVIVAL.
THE ALIEN BLOOD COULD BURN THROUGH STEEL. IMAGINE WHAT IT COULD DO TO A MAN'S FACE...
THROUGH IT ALL, RIPLEY WAS THERE FOR THE LITTLE GIRL.
AND IN THE END, SHE PREVAILED.


THE LAST THING REBECCA COULD REMEMBER WAS RIPLEY'S FACE, COMFORTING HER AS THEY PREPARED FOR THE LONG TRIP HOME.
ARE WE GOING TO SLEEP ALL THE WAY HOME?
ALL THE WAY HOME.
CAN WE DREAM?
YES, HONEY. I THINK WE BOTH CAN.
SHE TRUSTED HER.
WHEN THE LITTLE GIRL AWOKE, SHE LEARNED THE MEANING OF BETRAYAL.
GATEWAY MEDICAL FACILITY -- EARTH ORBIT PLATFORM.
RIPLEY! WHERE'S RIPLEY?
YEARS OF PAIN -- OF BEING ALONE. THE LITTLE GIRL GREW OLDER--
REBECCA DIED. A FRIGHTENED LONELY SURVIVOR NAMED NEWT TOOK HER PLACE.
--AND CAME TO HATE RIPLEY.
SHE GREW UP ALONE, A PRISONER OF HER NIGHTMARES. IF IT WEREN'T FOR HICKS, SHE WOULD HAVE DIED IN THAT HOSPITAL.

YOU RESCUED ME FROM THE ALIENS AND THEN YOU ABANDONED ME--
CHRIST, RIPLEY, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS --WHY DID YOU HAVE TO COME BACK?
I DON'T OWE YOU ANYTHING, NEWT. I DID MY JOB. WHATEVER HAPPENED AFTER WASN'T MY--
YOU'RE A LIAR!
SLAP!
I WANT AN ANSWER. I HAVE TO KNOW WHY.
YOU THINK I WANTED TO LEAVE YOU?
I DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOICE.

"I WATCHED YOU AS YOU FELL TO SLEEP--THEN I WENT TO FIND MY OWN PEACE. IT WAS OVER.
"WE WERE GOING HOME.
"FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE IT HAD STARTED, I COULD DREAM OF LIFE--BEGINNINGS.
"THAT WAS ALL THEY WERE. DREAMS.
SHE'S COMING OUT OF IT.
NGGHHH --HOW LONG--
ABOUT THREE DAYS. YOU'LL START FEELING BETTER ONCE--
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU MEAN, "THREE DAYS"? TRAVEL TIME TO EARTH IS WEEKS--
STILL IS.
YOUR MISSION'S NOT OVER YET.
YOU BASTARDS--
--YOU MISERABLE BASTARDS.

...THE GOVERNMENT DECIDED ONE SHIP JUST WASN'T ENOUGH--
--SENT YOU TO MAKE SURE THE JOB GOT DONE.
WHY THE HELL ARE YOU HERE, CAPTAIN HANKERSON?
WE'VE BEEN ANALYZING THE SULACO'S TRANSMISSIONS FROM THE TIME YOU ENTERED PLANETARY ORBIT. YOU'RE GETTING TO BE AN EXPERT ON LV-426.
YEAH. THROUGH ATTRITION.
NOT THAT IT MATTERS. THE TERRA-FORMING REACTOR WENT CRITICAL AND DUSTED THE PLACE JUST AFTER--
HARDLY. THE FACILITY'S HISTORY...
...BUT THAT'S A CORPORATE INSURANCE PROBLEM.
WE'RE INTERESTED IN SOMETHING ELSE.

DALLAS.
PARKER.
KANE.
NAMES MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?
YOU KNOW THEY DO.
THEY WERE THE CREW OF MY FIRST SHIP— THE NOSTROMO.
WE-WE'D PICKED UP WHAT WE THOUGHT WAS A DISTRESS SIGNAL FROM LV-426. AFTER LANDING, DALLAS, KANE, AND LAMBERT WENT OUT TO INVESTIGATE. AND IT STARTED...
PER THE CORPORATION, ALL TAPES WERE LOST AFTER YOU SELF-DESTRUCTED THE NOSTROMO.
I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SHOW YOU.
CLICK
WHAT TH--? THAT'S FROM KANE'S HELMET CAMERA -- WHEN WE DID OUR PRELIMINARY RECON OF THE DERELICT SHIP...
ALL THE CORPORATE BULL-SHIT ABOUT NO PROOF --CHRIST--EARTH'S KNOWN THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CREATURES FROM THE START...
DOES THAT SURPRISE YOU?
NO. I SUPPOSE IT DOESN'T.

"THE INBOARD SUIT RECORDERS LOGGED *EVERYTHING*. THE NOSTROMO'S *ANDROID* DUMPED THE DATA INTO THE ESCAPE POD'S COMPUTER LONG BEFORE YOU SLAGGED HIM AND BLEW THE MAIN SHIP.

"WE ASSUME THIS... *CREATURE*... WAS INCUBATING THE ALIEN SPORE WHEN IT DIED."

COMMAND BELIEVES IT WAS SOME SORT OF *NAVIGATOR* OR *PILOT*--"

BUT IT'S JUST *DEAD*-- LIKE DALLAS, KANE AND THE *REST* OF THEM.

DID YOU WAKE ME UP FOR MY *ADVICE*? IT'S *REAL SIMPLE*

IF ACHERON'S STILL INTACT-- IF *ANY* OF THOSE THINGS ARE STILL ALIVE

DROP A NUKE AND *WASTE* THEM

SEE, I KNOW HOW THIS *ENDS*--

--THEY ALL *DIE*.

THE MONSTERS— THEY'RE JUST ANIMALS. BUT THIS CREATURE REPRESENTS SENTIENT LIFE, CAPABLE OF NAVIGATION, CONSTRUCTION -
I MANAGED TO PULL A PARTIAL TRANSLATION OF THAT ALIEN SIGNAL BEFORE EVERYTHING WENT TO HELL. IT WAS NO DISTRESS SIGNAL. IT WAS A WARNING.
I'M GOING TO MAKE IT EASY FOR YOU. THIS IS A SCIENTIFIC EXPEDITION --THAT'S ALL. AND I NEED A GUIDE
THOSE ANIMALS PUT YOUR "SENTIENT LIFE" OUT OF BUSINESS, CAPTAIN --THE SAME WAY THEY DESTROYED THE NOSTROMO, YOUR MARINES, AND THE COLONISTS ON ACHERON!
SURE. AND WHAT'S THE BRIBE THIS TIME, CAPTAIN? REINSTATEMENT? BACK PAY?
I'M NEVER GOING BACK--
--DISCUSSION OVER.
YOU'RE ACTING LIKE YOU HAVE A CHOICE--
JESUS--YOU THINK YOU CAN THREATEN ME? AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN THROUGH--?
THREATEN?
NO.
BUT I'M GOING TO HAVE RELIABLE FIRST-PERSON INFORMATION ON THIS MISSION--
--AND IF YOU'RE UNWILLING, I CAN ALWAYS WAKE UP THE CORPORAL
--OR THE LITTLE GIRL

"I'D SEEN HANKERSONS KIND BEFORE--FULL OF THE MINDLESS BRAVADO THAT COMES FROM *IGNORANCE*.

"THE MARINES SET THE SULACOS AUTOMATIC GUIDANCE SYSTEMS FOR EARTH, AND GAVE ME AN HOUR TO PREPARE FOR THEIR DAMNED MISSION

I SPENT THOSE LAST MINUTES WITH YOU

"DON'T YOU SEE NEWT? I WOULD HAVE DONE *ANYTHING* TO PROTECT YOU

"PLAY ALONG WITH HANKERSONS 'EXPEDITION' --RETURN TO FACE THOSE *THINGS*--"

TIME'S UP --LET'S GO

EVEN *LEAVE* YOU

"HANKERSON'S MARINES WERE SO MUCH *LIKE* THE OTHERS. I DIDN'T WANT TO GET CLOSE TO THEM. I *KNEW* THEY WERE GOING TO DIE."

REGULATION DUCHAMP BLASTER--500 ROUND MAG WITH TWO IN-BOARD CLIPS. MEDIUM RECOIL. PAS POOR AT A DISTANCE BUT A REAL *MOTHER* UP CLOSE.

I THINK I CAN MANAGE

UHH EXCUSE ME, MAJOR--YOU SURE YOU KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THAT?

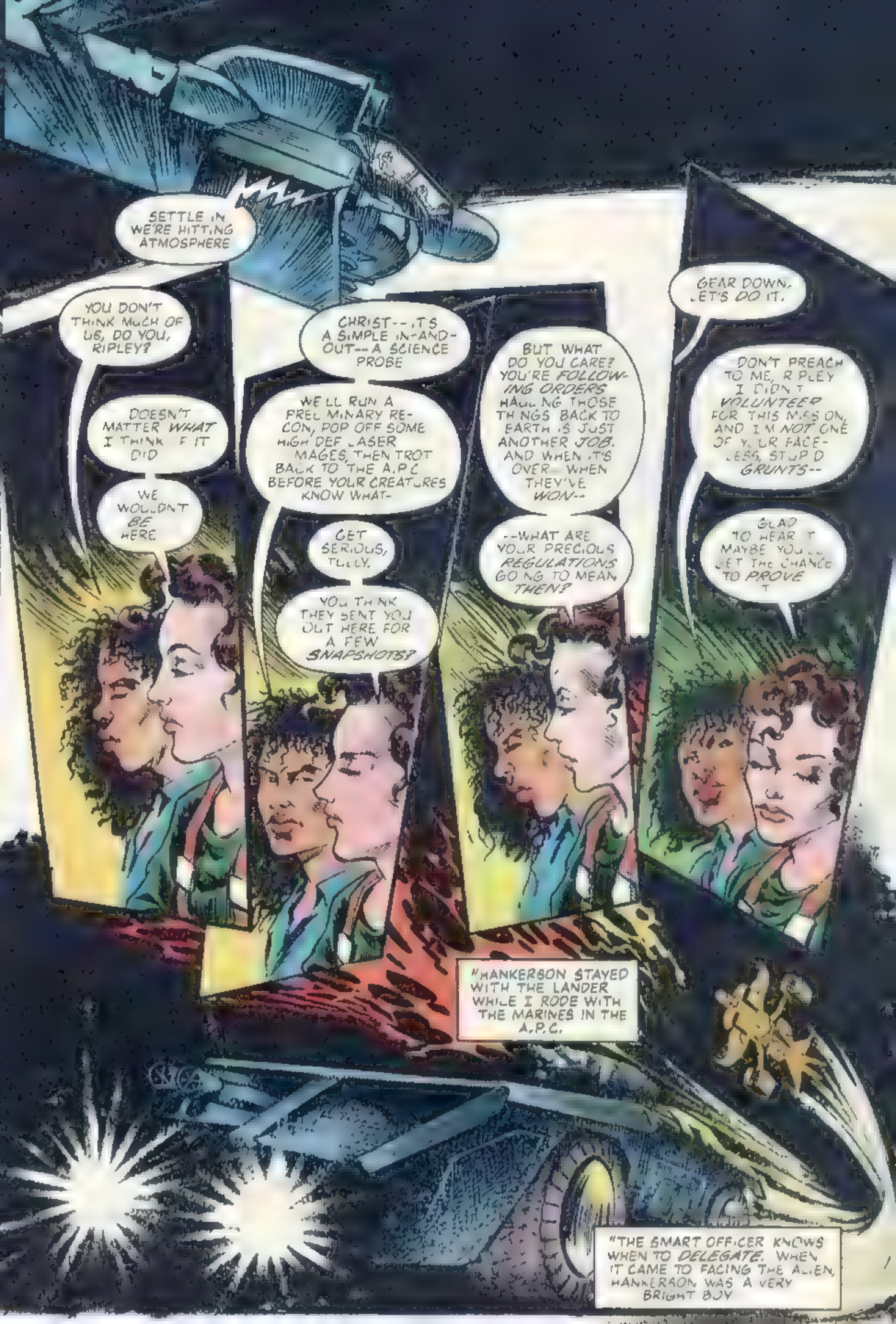
"I KNEW WHAT THEY WERE THINKING. THE MARINES ON THE SULACO DIED BECAUSE THEY *MESSED* UP--BUT THEIR TEAM WAS *BETTER* THAN THAT. *TOUGHER, MEANER.*"

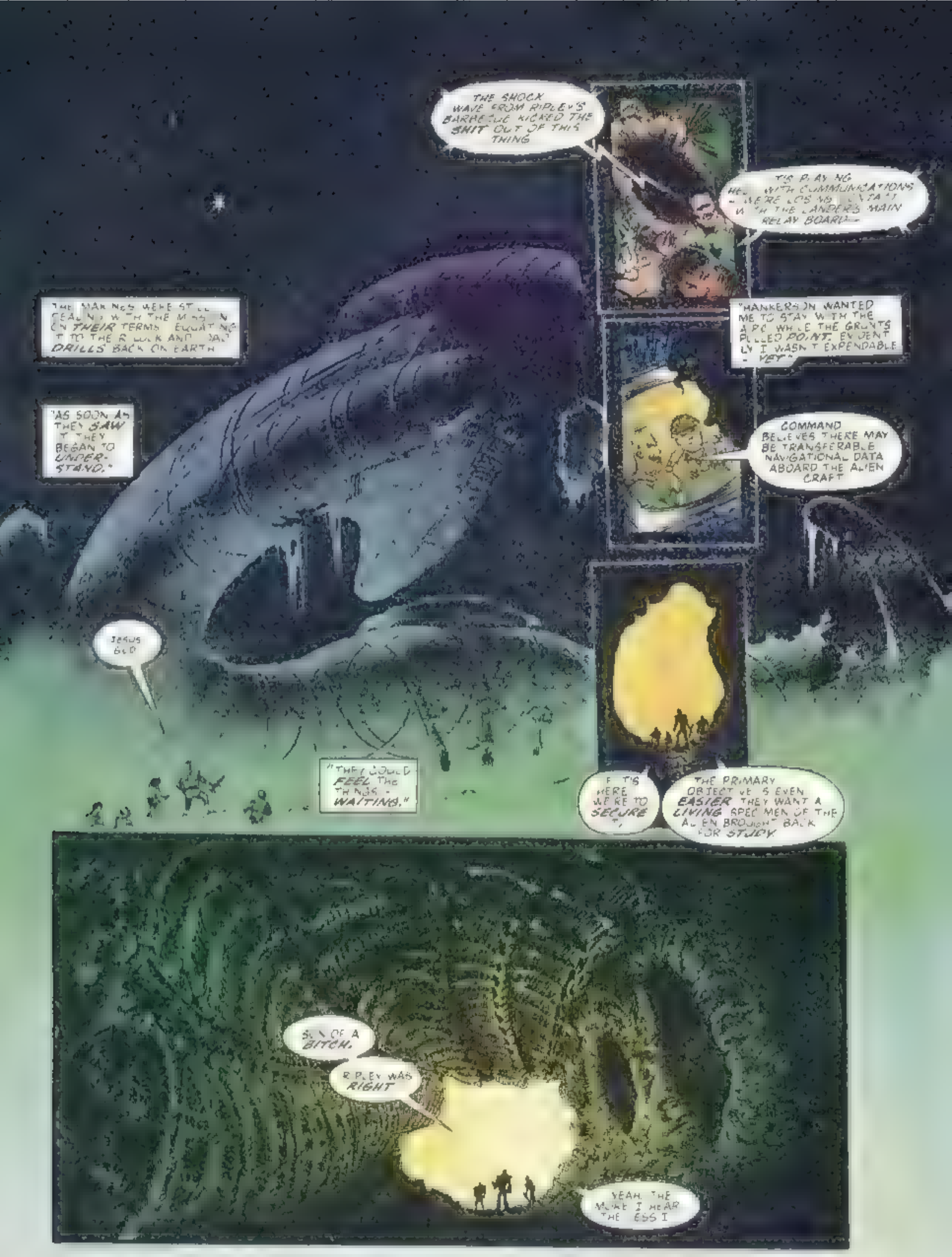
I WANT EVERYONE DOWN AND BUCKLED--SEPARATION IN TWO MINUTES.

"THE FIRST SQUAD FELT THE SAME WAY ABOUT THE CREW OF THE *NOSTROMO.*"

"OUR ALMIGHTY TECHNOLOGY LULLED US INTO BELIEVING WE WERE SOMEHOW *SUPERIOR* TO THE ALIEN...

"LIKE GUNS AND MACHINES MEAN A *DAMN* TO THE MONSTERS. LIKE *ANYTHING* DOES."


SETTLE IN WE'RE HITTING ATMOSPHERE
YOU DON'T THINK MUCH OF US, DO YOU, RIPLEY?
DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I THINK IF IT DID
WE WOULDN'T BE HERE
CHRIST--IT'S A SIMPLE IN-AND-OUT--A SCIENCE PROBE
WE'LL RUN A PRELIMINARY RE-CON, POP OFF SOME HIGH DEF LASER IMAGES, THEN TROT BACK TO THE A.P.C BEFORE YOUR CREATURES KNOW WHAT-
GET SERIOUS, TULLY.
YOU THINK THEY SENT YOU OUT HERE FOR A FEW SNAPSHOTS?
BUT WHAT DO YOU CARE? YOU'RE FOLLOWING ORDERS HAULING THOSE THINGS BACK TO EARTH IS JUST ANOTHER JOB. AND WHEN IT'S OVER--WHEN THEY'VE WON--
--WHAT ARE YOUR PRECIOUS REGULATIONS GOING TO MEAN THEN?
GEAR DOWN. LET'S DO IT.
DON'T PREACH TO ME, RIPLEY I DIDN'T VOLUNTEER FOR THIS MISSION, AND I'M NOT ONE OF YOUR FACE-LESS, STUPID GRUNTS--
GLAD TO HEAR IT MAYBE YOU'LL GET THE CHANCE TO PROVE IT
"HANKERSON STAYED WITH THE LANDER WHILE I RODE WITH THE MARINES IN THE A.P.C.
"THE SMART OFFICER KNOWS WHEN TO DELEGATE. WHEN IT CAME TO FACING THE ALIEN, HANKERSON WAS A VERY BRIGHT BOY


THE SHOCK WAVE FROM RIPLEY'S BARBECUE KICKED THE SHIT OUT OF THIS THING
"MANKERSON WANTED ME TO STAY WITH THE APC WHILE THE GRUNTS PULLED POINT. EVIDENTLY I WASN'T EXPENDABLE - YET."
COMMAND BELIEVES THERE MAY BE TRANSFERABLE NAVIGATIONAL DATA ABOARD THE ALIEN CRAFT
"AS SOON AS THEY SAW IT THEY BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND."
JESUS GOD
"THEY COULD FEEL THE THINGS - WAITING."
IT'S HERE WE'RE TO SECURE IT.
THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS EVEN EASIER. THEY WANT A LIVING SPECIMEN OF THE ALIEN BROUGHT BACK FOR STUDY.
SON OF A BITCH.
RIPLEY WAS RIGHT
YEAH. THE MORE I HEAR THE LESS I

--LIKE IT.
OH JESUS,
MOVEMENT, FIFTY YARDS.
RIPLEY-- TALK TO ME, DAMN IT--!
SOME OF THEM MUST HAVE SURVIVED THE EXPLOSION AND RETURNED TO THE DERELICT--
DON'T PUSH IT, SERGEANT--YOU'RE SAFER OUTSIDE ON OPEN GROUND--
;KRKZZZ;-- THIS IS HANKERSON. YOU WILL NOT EVACUATE UNTIL I GIVE -;KRZZZ;-
RIPLEY IS ;KRKZZZ; --TACTICAL ADVICE--I AM IN COMMAND OF THIS--

WE'RE LOSING THE LANDER'S SIGNAL, BUT I THINK YOU GET THE DRIFT. LET'S MAKE THIS QUICK AND PAINLESS.
FORTY YARDS, CLOSING.
DAMN IT, SERGEANT, THEY KNOW YOU'RE THERE!
YOU'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM--
AGHHH--!
UMMPH!
CRUNCH
CRUMPH

MASTERS --
ARE YOU--?
"IT STARTED SLOWLY-- AN ELECTRO-MAGNETIC SYNTHESIS I CAN'T PRETEND TO UNDERSTAND."
OH GOD--
CAN'T -- CAN'T MOVE MY LEGS -- CAN'T--
"THE MARINE MUST HAVE TRIGGERED SOME SORT OF POWER SOURCE INSIDE THE ALIEN VESSEL--
"IT WAS MORE THAN SIMPLE ENERGY-- IT WAS AN INTUITIVE, LIVING FORCE -- IT TOOK CONTROL OF THE A.P.C.'S SYSTEMS, RE-PROGRAMMING THE TRACTOR'S 'SMART' COMPUTERS TO UNDERSTAND A NEW LANGUAGE."
"IT FOLLOWED HIS LIFE-SUPPORT SIGNAL LIKE AN ELECTRONIC SNAKE, ENTERING THE A.P.C.'S COMMUNICATIONS DECK.
WHAT IN--?
"THE READ-OUTS FLICKERED WITH A LITANY OF INDECIPHERABLE INFORMATION-- ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF THE DEAD PILOT'S MIND.
"OUR MACHINES USE SCREENS AND VISUAL READ-OUTS TO DELIVER DATA. THE DERELICT'S COMPUTERS WENT STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE.
"IT SPOKE TO ME."

"IT WAS THE REST OF THE *DISTRESS SIGNAL* I'D PICKED UP ABOARD THE NOSTROMO-- EXCEPT THIS TIME I COULD *UNDER-STAND.*

"THEN I SAW *HER*--

"WE ASSUMED THE ALIEN INFESTATIONS WERE SPORADIC *ARBITRARY*-- THAT THEY BRED WHEREVER CONVENIENT, LIKE SOME HORRIBLE *CANCERS.*

"I SAW TELE-METRY INFOR-MATION, STAR CHARTS, TAN-GENTIAL *REFERENCE* POINTS.

"--I FELT HER *STRENGTH,* HER UTTER *SUPREMACY.*

"WE WERE *WRONG.* THEY MOVE WITH *PURPOSE.*

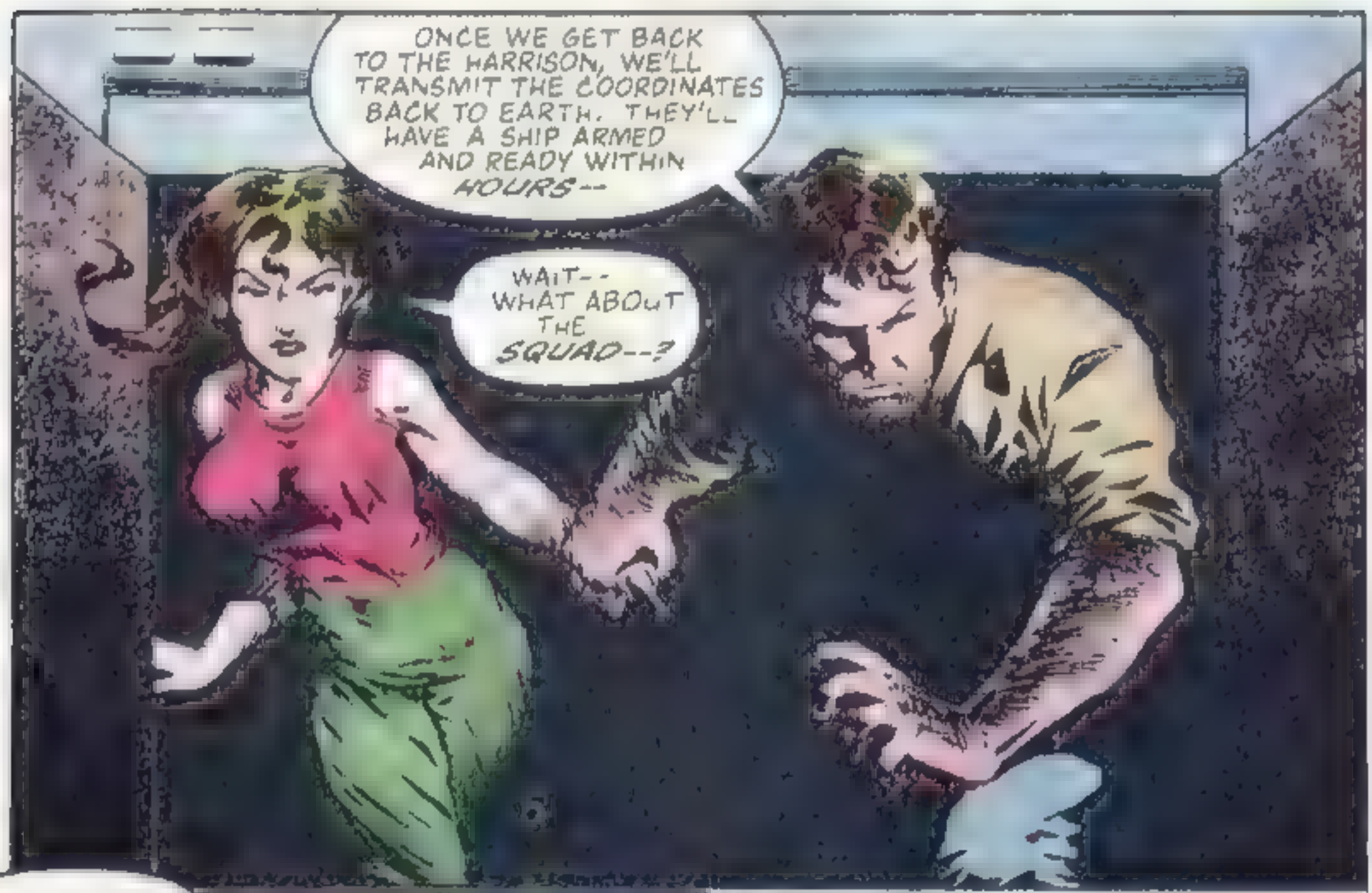
"THE PILOT OF THE DERELICT SHIP HAD DISCOVERED THE ALIENS' GENESIS-- THE SOURCE OF THEIR *POWER.*

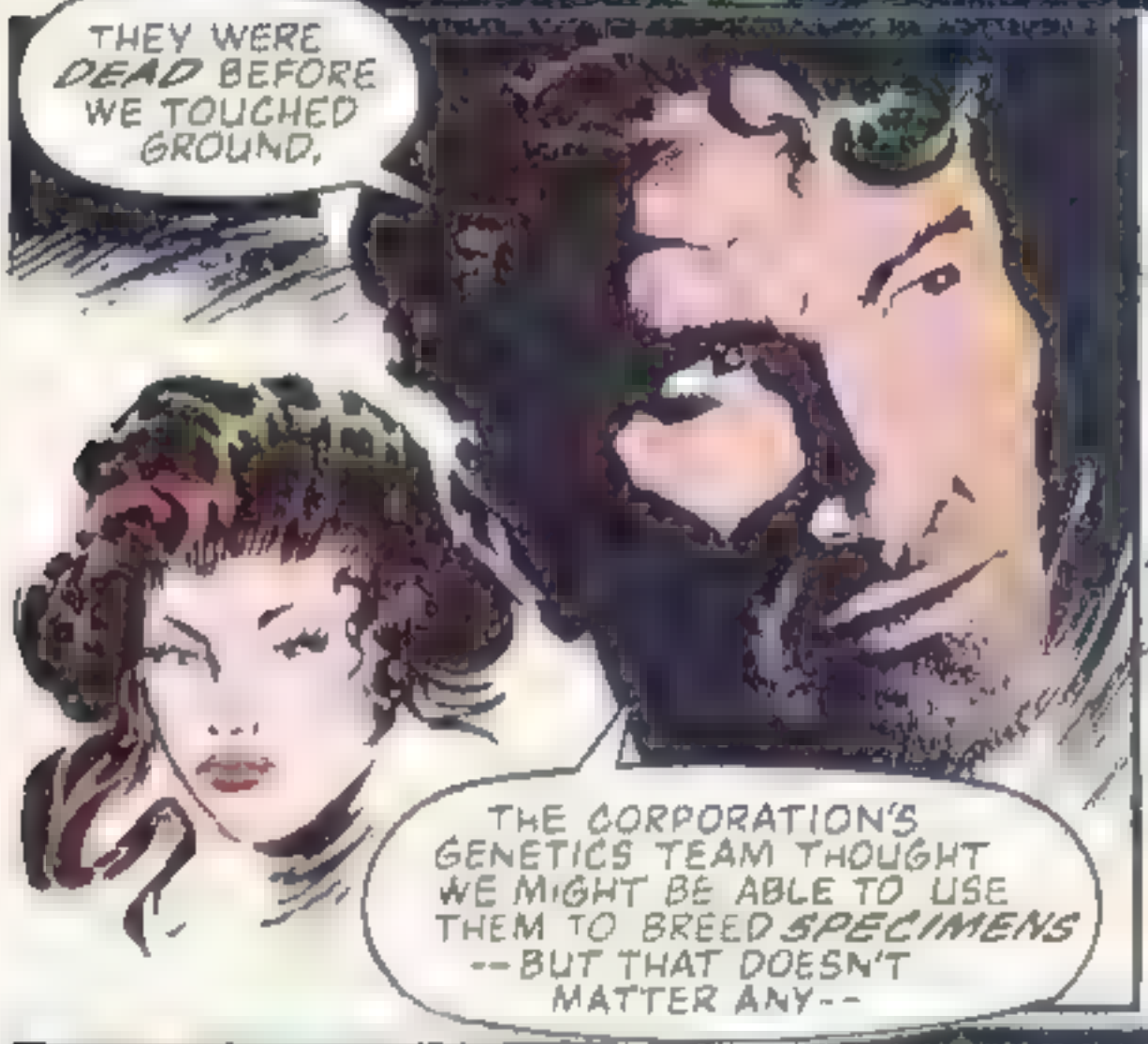
"SHE'S CALLING HER CHILDREN *BACK* TO HER."

TEN YARDS.
DAMN T SERGEANT, THEY'RE ALMOST ON TOP OF US--!
MASTERS --GIVE ME YOUR HAND --I'LL PULL YOU-
UCCKK--!

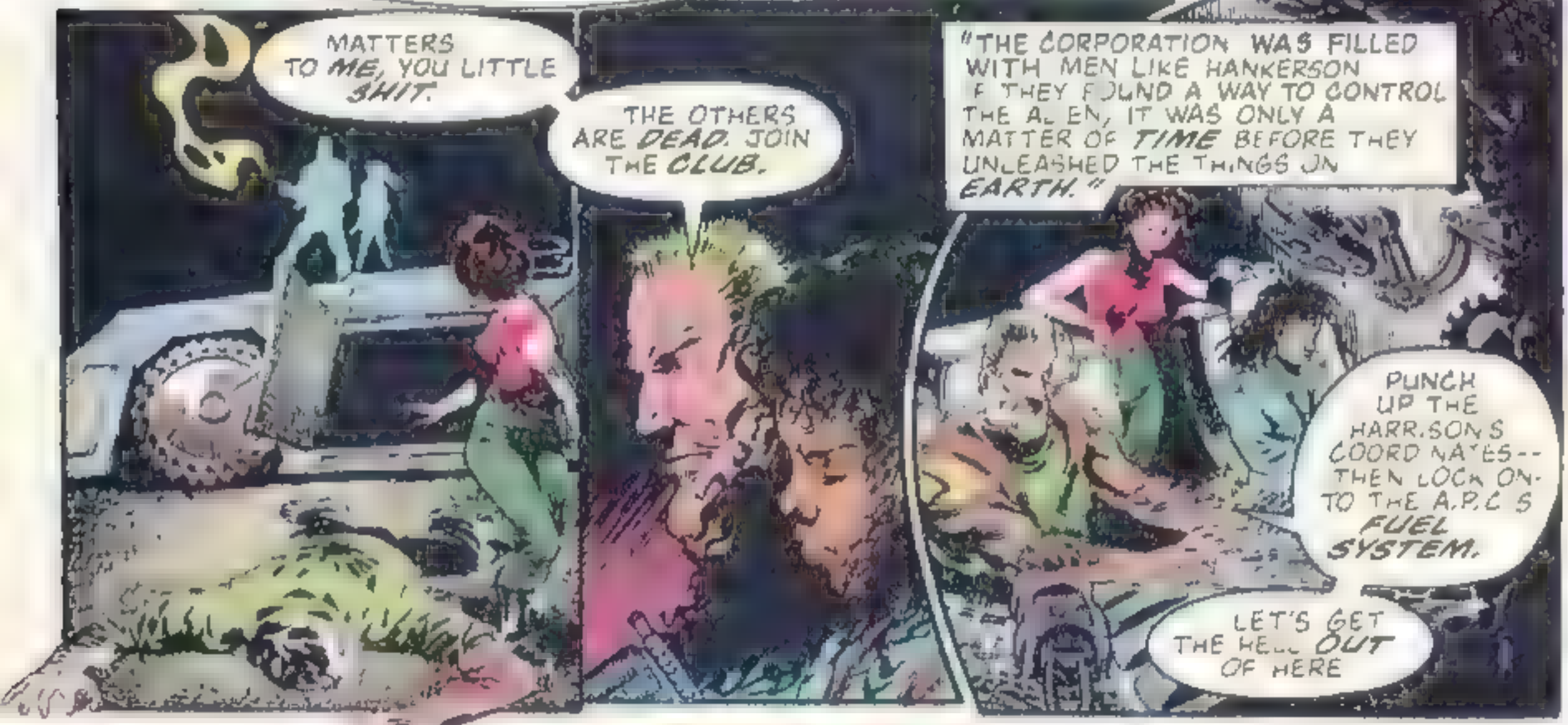
CONCENTRATE YOUR FIRE, DAMN IT! THE HULL'S ALREADY--
GET DOWN!
"SUDDENLY IT STOPPED. I FELT THE ALIEN IMAGES DRIFTING AWAY, LEAVING ONLY A PIERCING, HOLLOW ROAR--
UGGHH--
NOOOO--!
SON OF A BITCH--
--THEY'RE EVERYWHERE!
"--THE RESIDUAL HUM OF THE DEAD ONE'S LAST WARNING."

"I KNEW."
RIPLEY-- I CAN'T BRING UP THE SQUAD-- THE SIGNAL'S BEEN JAMMED BY--
WHAT TH--? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU--?
IT--IT WASN'T INTENDED FOR US--
--WE INTERCEPTED THE MESSAGE--IT WAS AN ACCIDENT--IT WAS--
WHAT DID YOU SEE?
COURSE TRAJECTORIES, STAR FIELDS-- THE ALIENS' GENESIS.
A MOTHER'S DESIRE...
THIS IS BETTER THAN I EVER DREAMED...
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOUR INFORMATION IS WORTH?


ONCE WE GET BACK TO THE HARRISON, WE'LL TRANSMIT THE COORDINATES BACK TO EARTH. THEY'LL HAVE A SHIP ARMED AND READY WITHIN HOURS--
WAIT-- WHAT ABOUT THE SQUAD--?


THEY WERE DEAD BEFORE WE TOUCHED GROUND.
THE CORPORATION'S GENETICS TEAM THOUGHT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE THEM TO BREED SPECIMENS --BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER ANY--

SUKKS!


MATTERS TO ME, YOU LITTLE SHIT.
THE OTHERS ARE DEAD. JOIN THE CLUB.
"THE CORPORATION WAS FILLED WITH MEN LIKE HANKERSON IF THEY FOUND A WAY TO CONTROL THE ALIEN, IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY UNLEASHED THE THINGS ON EARTH."
PUNCH UP THE HARRISON'S COORDINATES-- THEN LOCK ON TO THE A.P.C.'S FUEL SYSTEM.
LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE

"I HAD SEEN WHAT THE CORPORATION WOULD DO TO RETRIEVE ONE OF THE CREATURES. IMAGINE WHAT THEY WOULD DO TO TRACK AN ENTIRE PLANET.
"WE DETONATED THE A.P.C. FROM ORBIT, TERMINATING THE LAST OF THE CORPORATION'S 'SPECIMENS.'
"IT WOULD TAKE WEEKS FOR A SECOND MILITARY VESSEL TO REACH ACHERON-- BUT IT WOULD COME.
"SOONER OR LATER THEY WOULD PIECE TOGETHER WHAT HAPPENED. SOONER OR LATER THEY'D COME FOR ME."

EVERYTHING WAS SO COMPLICATED. I KEPT THINKING OF YOU, NEWT-- BUT I COULDN'T FORGET HANKERSON'S MISSION--
--OR THE IDEA OF THOSE ALIEN THINGS ON EARTH.
THE THREE OF US DISAPPEARED, LOSING OURSELVES IN ONE OF THE OUTER COLONIES. I PRAYED THE CORPORATION WOULD NEVER FIND THEIR PRECIOUS SPECIMEN--
--BUT OF COURSE THEY DID.
SO MUCH FOR PRAYERS.
SO YOU'VE COME BACK TO SAVE US.
AND HOW THE HELL ARE YOU GOING TO DO THAT?
BY GOING TO RIPLEY'S GENESIS WORLD AND USING THE ALIEN THE WAY IT'S BEEN USING US--
--THEN BLOWING THE UGLY BASTARDS STRAIGHT TO HELL.

BUG HUNT

c/o Dark Horse Comics
2008S.E.Monroe
Milwaukie, OR 97222

Dear Dark Horse,

"Color would spoil it," they said. "Let's keep it in black and white," they said. Admittedly, I too was one of the legion of fans who swore by the moody atmospherics created by Mark Nelson in *Aliens Book I*. He and Mark Verheiden were indeed an excellent team -- and a daunting act to follow. However, the offering made by the new teamup of Verheiden and Beauvais in *Aliens Book II* had me entranced throughout. The cover artwork alone on the new *Aliens* #1 beats everything that has gone before. It's magnificent.

I can only admire and congratulate your integrity in taking what was already a highly successful series and managing to improve it.

Long live Hicks and Newt -- and the airbrush of Denis Beauvais.

Yours,
Paul Campbell
Belfast, Northern Ireland

So, Paul, what do you think of the new team of Mark Verheiden and Sam Kieth? It seems (to ye olde editor, at least) that Sam is equally adept at doling out those "moody atmospherics" you're so fond of, while Monika Livingston complements the line art with her subtle color choices. And John Bolton's covers...well, talk about a daunting act to follow!

Dear Dark Horse,

As if the first series wasn't perfect enough, you've come back with an even better color book. You guys blow me away! *[Hey, what about us gals?!]*

The black and white six-issue series was perfect. Mark and Mark truly did an excellent job. The story alone put the movie to shame, and the art...well, let's just say that Mark Nelson would make other "pro" artists look like morons with a box of crayons in their hands.

But here comes the color four-issue series and, I must say, issue #1 at least equals (or tops!) the earlier efforts. Verheiden is as great as ever with script and story. And Denis Beauvais' art virtually bursts off the page.

You've got me hooked on Dark Horse. I hope you're proud of yourselves.

Your devout worshipper,
William Berweger
McMinnville, OR

Natch! And since you're such a big Mark Nelson fan, get ready for another Aliens story soon to be drawn by meticulous Mark. Keep reading "Bug Hunt" for more details!

Dear Mark,

Poor Newt. It looks like the nightmare will never be over. Isn't there *ever* going to be a happy ending in this book? It's very much a case of "out of the frying pan, into the fire." And now they haven't just got the Aliens to deal with, there's what remains of mankind's greedy corporations, too.

The first issue of the second volume of *Aliens* was even better than I expected. I was skeptical that anyone could successfully follow Mark Nelson's work on this series, but Denis Beauvais has proved me wrong. I have to admit, I hadn't been that impressed with his previous work, but this by far surpasses that -- something true of many of Dark Horse's artists, in fact. The use of color in this story was an art in itself, and maybe occasionally there was too much variety, but the overall visual impression was fantastic. The spirit, the feel of the various Aliens stories (film or comics) has been recaptured by Denis and yourself.

There were parts of this issue that showed it was a first issue designed to attract new readers -- notably the opening sequence in which, once again, we were confronted with that spooky uncertainty of not knowing quite where the enemy is. As Newt and Hicks went searching, you just *knew* they were going to find some of the monsters. It was a question of when -- not if. Newt's dream and the eventual fiery disposal of one of the Aliens were also scene-setters. Also, there's the possibility of Hicks being infected, or impregnated, although his stomach pains could be a red herring, deliberately but misleadingly reminding us of John Hurt's demise in the first film.

In the end, everything's set up for the next phase in the story of the Aliens; this is something you're showing yourself to be capable of running for quite some time yet, well beyond this four-issue series, if you wish. The scale of the battle is increasing with each story, it seems, progressing from the two films into the two comic series, and the directions you could go remain varied. But until that time when there are either no human beings or no Aliens left, there are stories to tell -- and even those eventualities might not be the end!

Take care,
Malcolm Bourne
Lancashire, England

Indeed, Malcolm! In fact, here we are back at the beginning again! And I'll be interested in your evaluation of this latest direction.

Dear Dark Horsemen,

When I read that the new *Aliens* limited series would be in full color, I was a little worried; I thought the marvelous comics noir feel of the first series might be lost. That was before I set eyes on the work of Monsieur Denis Beauvais. *Magnifique*! It was as if Dark Horse had gotten Ralph McQuarrie, whose *Star Wars* production paintings I have long admired, to illustrate a comic book. Beauvais' work here reminds me a bit of McQuarrie's, but not overly so. This is not Ralph McQuarrie; this is not Mark Nelson; this is a fine artist in his own right who deftly proves that sometimes the whole is *less* than the sum of the parts, i.e., bright colors + dark colors = one very dark comic. The contrasts are great: the purple nebula behind the shadowy ship on pages 1 and 23, the whitish-gray video images in the darkened helm on pages 2 and 3, the icy black Alien against the white-hot flames on page 22, the gray human figures standing before the light blue Alien receptacles on page 24. The decision to blacken the panel border space was a wise one, as was filling each entire page with this already classic art rather than leaving the edges blank. The more Beauvais, the better!

Oh, yeah, Mark Verheiden's writing wasn't too bad either!

Erik C. Miller
Bloomington, IN

Actually, Erik, that first issue was a little too dark for our taste, but now that the bugs are out of the color process (we hope), current issues should look even better!

Dark Horse,

I'm very impressed with the way the Aliens story is progressing. It reflects a lot of time and effort on your part to create a story that works on the many levels this one does. Although I'm more partial to the Aliens artwork of the second series, the artwork of both series is way above the artwork found in most other comics on the market, especially that of the two other major comics organizations. Very good work.

But the main reason I'm writing deals with the question of whether or not this would make a viable monthly series. I am sure you are getting letter upon letter asking to extend this story to monthly frequency, and I'm sure you are seriously thinking about trying it. Before you do, I would like to give my opinion on the matter.

Although I love the story and where it is heading, I do not think it should become a monthly series. Stories of this caliber just cannot be churned out every month of every year. Eventually the story would regress to the point of sounding like a lot of garbage, just like what tends to be published by two other companies I know of. When an excellently thought out story like the one I'm reading cannot be found, filler stories are written to tide the public over until a good story comes in: the problem is that there tend to be more filler stories than there are really good ones.

Another reason I would not want *Aliens* to become a monthly book concerns the mystery of the Aliens. To paraphrase a line from "Who Shot Liberty Valance," when all the facts of a legend are known, the legend is no longer a legend. I believe the same implication applies here. One of the main reasons the Aliens are so menacing and awe-inspiring is the fact that we know so little about them. What do they eat? *Do* they eat? How long do they live? Do they mutate to satisfy their needs from the environment? Now, if all the questions about the Aliens are answered in a monthly series, where is the fear? Where is the awe? And these questions would eventually have to be addressed in a monthly series, if only to keep the readership up. So what then? Automatons that are wound up and thrown against each other might be what we'd pick up each month (although I'm sure the writers would do their best to do otherwise), or worse yet: end of book.

Now, I'm not totally against a monthly series. I would definitely buy it if one came out. But I don't want the series to lose the edge it has now. I mean, look at the *Terminator* series. It was great when it first came out, but then it began to focus only on certain characters, and then the machines developed a personality. At the moment Now Comics is publishing a "series within a series" to save the book's readership. So far, at least, this new "series" is incorporating elements that made the title popular in the first place, but what will happen twelve issues down the line? *[What happened is that Now lost the*

license to publish The Terminator *in comic book format, and Dark Horse got the license instead. Look for our first issue of four, written by John Arcudi and drawn by Chris Warner and Paul Guinan, to be released in August.]*

If a monthly series is in the works, please take these suggestions into consideration. Write it in a casebook format. Don't limit yourself by following some time line and using the same characters every month. Use as many characters as there are types of people in the world. This offers a great opportunity for new and interesting stories, since different classes and cultures may react differently. Don't lose the awe and mystery of the Aliens; yet, when the time feels right, give us a little tidbit of information to keep us interested. But most importantly, don't lose your integrity.

Thank you for your effort and your kind attention.

Richard Townsend
(address withheld by request)

Richard, you needn't worry. Despite several letters demanding that Aliens *become an ongoing monthly series, the Dark Horse head honchos have decided to give you the best of both worlds instead: while we hope to provide you with ongoing Aliens stories, each different story will comprise its own limited series, written and drawn by various writers and artists respectively. In this way, you'll be spared the dreaded filler issue, which is the bane of all ongoing series, but you can still get a regular dose of Aliens -- and we can keep our integrity, which is the way we like it!*

Dear Dark Horse,

Out of all the comics I collect, *Aliens* has got to be number one. The second series surpasses the first – something I did not think possible.

I have three questions for you:

1. Will *Aliens* ever become a regular series?
2. Why are the Dark Horse comics always so late? The *Aliens vs. Predator* series should already be out.
3. Will *Predator* become a regular series?

Matt Wolfson
Brooklyn, NY

1. See Richard Townsend's letter and my response.

2. Here's a little secret for all comic book readers who get aggravated when a book is late: 99% of the time, when a comic book is late, there is only one reason for that -- the creative team is late. 'Nuff said. However, please note that Aliens vs. Predator *#1 is on the stands even as you read this, and subsequent issues will follow on a regular, bimonthly basis.*

3. See (1) above! We are working on the second four-issue series, titled Predator: Big Game, *written by John Arcudi and drawn by Neil Hansen. This should make its debut before the end of the year.*

Dear Dark Horse,

It's said, "You can't judge a book by its cover," and any comic book collector can tell you that that phrase all too often applies to comic books. More than once I've fallen prey to an interesting or attractive cover only to find the inside artwork leaving a lot to be desired. On occasion, I've found excellent artwork inside and out, but then the story falls short. This has happened so often recently that I've been forced to become skeptical and cautious of the comics I buy.

So, regrettably, when I saw the cover of *Aliens* #1 (second series), I didn't pick it up. It honestly looked *too* good and that scared me off. Then, several months later, I saw issue #2 on the stands, with an equally awesome cover. Curiosity took over and I picked it up. Glancing at its interior artwork, I was surprised to discover the quality was equal to that of the cover. I soon found myself grabbing a copy of issue #1...the artwork alone was worth the money. I had both books open the moment I got home and was very happy to find the story to be as impressive as the art. I haven't been this pleased with a comic book for some time.

You've set a new standard for comic books that's going to be hard to beat, but don't let that stop you from trying. Thanks for restoring my "faith" in comic books. Keep up the outstanding work, and (even though I'm sure you're sick of hearing this by now)...*bring back Ripley!*

Sincerely,
Rod Koepp
Long Beach, CA

All right, all right! She's back, already!

Sam Kieth fans: Make sure to check out *I Before E*, a collection of Sam's illustrations and short comics stories, published by our pals at Fantagraphics.

And be with us just two short months from now when *Aliens: Earth War* #2 hits the stands (then monthly for the remainder of the series), as Ripley and her crew set off to trap mama Alien...and bring her to Earth? Don't miss the next exciting issue, brought to you courtesy of Mark Verheiden and Sam Kieth -- not to mention Pat Brosseau, Monika Livingston, and all the fine folks here at Dark Horse!

-- Diana Schutz